

**Tompkins County IDA Approved Meeting Minutes**  
**February 21, 2013**  
**Old Jail Conference Room**  
**125 E. Court Street, Ithaca, NY**

**Present:** Martha Robertson, Will Burbank, Svante Myrick, Jim Dennis, Nathan Shinagawa, Larry Baum

**Excused:** Grace Chiang

**Staff Present:** Michael Stamm, Heather Filiberto, Ina Arthur (recording), Mariette Geldenhuys

**Guests Present:** Kevin Urgo, Mathew Jalazo (Urgo Hotels), Bill Andris, Steve Ranier, Jim Rajkowski (Widewaters), Jonathan Dawson, Shailee Shah (Cornell Daily Sun), Michael Talariski (IBEW Local 241), Marcus Williamee (UA Local 267), Mark Darling (Ithaca College Sustainability), Philly DeSarno, Joann Cornish, Nels Bohn (City of Ithaca), Roberta Wallitt (Action), Nancy K. Bereano (City of Ithaca Workforce Diversity Committee), Theresa Alt, Pete Meyers (TC Workers' Center), Jeff Furman, Steve Headrick, Gary Ferguson (Downtown Ithaca Alliance), Pete Blanchard (WHCU), Jean McPheeters (TC Chamber of Commerce), Chuck Smith, Brian Noteboom (Charpenters LU 277), Stanly W. McPherson, Milton Webb, Paula Burke, Joe Mareane (TC Administration), Dooley Kiefer (TC Legislature), Steven Hugo (HOLT Architects) and others

**CALL TO ORDER** The meeting was called to order at 3:50 PM

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA** - None

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR**

Those who spoke during the privilege of the floor were speaking regarding the Hotel Ithaca Application.

Theresa Alt of the Tompkins County Workers' Center spoke against the project. She stated that it is not economic development if it does not produce living wage jobs.

Dooley Kiefer of the Tompkins County Legislature spoke against the project. She stated that she is not pleased that the IDA has considered retail projects in the past and she is not please with this hotel project. The City of Ithaca is focused on projects to increase their tax base. They should look at their comprehensive plan and living wage jobs. She thinks there will be more hotel rooms than apartments downtown. She does not think the hotel needs tax incentives.

Nancy Bereano (City of Ithaca Workforce Diversity Committee) said that she has issues with and questions the diversity and employment of the Marriott Hotel. She wants a plan from the hotel that is definable and a commitment to deal with issues of diversity.

Roberta Wallitt stated she would like to encourage a commitment to diversity.

Jean McPheeters from the Chamber of Commerce spoke for the project. She reaffirmed the Convention and Visitor Bureau letter of support. She stated that Urgo Hotels is the developer; Marriott Hotels is just a brand. This hotel will bring more money into the area. She also acknowledged the high site costs to the developer.

Gary Ferguson (DIA) spoke in support of the project. He stated that it is a good use of the space and mirrored Ms. McPheeter's comments on the cost of development.

Mark Darling stated that he feels the project is a good one especially as it relates to energy conservation. He would urge the project to be a green building project – LEED Platinum.

Mike Talarski encouraged the project to employ local tax-payers during the building stages and to pay them a livable wage. This will keep the money local.

Charleen Height supported paying a livable wage to those working at the hotel.

Jeff Furman asked that information be available to the community at the public hearing. He would like to see information on:

1. diversity in hiring – give us information on the plan for diversity at all salary grades
2. living wage
3. environmental standards both in building and for workers at the hotel.

Stanley Wes McPheerson spoke as an advocate for a living wage to those building the hotel. The workers and contractors building the project should get a living wage.

Steve Hugo spoke in support of the project.

Chuck Smith of the Carpenter's Union spoke in support of a standard wage and diversity in hiring for the builders and the employees.

## **BUSINESS**

### Hotel Ithaca Application

Representatives from Urgo Hotels and Widewaters were present.

Ms. Filiberto introduced the project. She stated that this is the first application under the new CIITAP policy. Changes were made to the old "density policy" to make it more predictable for developers applying. This project meets all the policy's requirements and has demonstrated financial need for the 10-year abatement provision of the policy.

Mr. Kevin Urgo stated that this will be a 159 room upscale hotel with a high-end finish. The site is very small and there is a need to relocate utilities. There will also be 2500 sf of meeting space. The hotel will be energy efficient. He spoke at length of the heating and cooling system. Mr. Urgo spoke of how they will be paying 156% of the NYS minimum wage to the housekeepers employed at the hotel.

Mr. Myrick spoke in favor of the project. He stated that if this hotel is not built, someone else will build the 159 hotel rooms, but perhaps not in downtown Ithaca. The use of this site reduces sprawl, takes advantage of existing utilities, bus lines, and encourages more foot traffic to the businesses in downtown Ithaca. If this hotel is not built, someone will build a hotel and not come to the IDA for assistance so there will be no opportunity to encourage living wages, diversity of hiring, sustainability and energy efficient building. He would like to see a breakdown of wages and benefits for the jobs and a diversity of inclusion strategy.

Mr. Shinagawa asked what the procedure for this application would be – moved to public hearing and then back to the IDA Board for final approval. He echoed Mr. Myrick’s remarks and suggested forming a sub committee of the IDA to review the financial need and other documents prior to coming back to the IDA for final approval.

Mr. Dennis stated that he agrees with the things that Jeff Furman brought up and that these should be addressed. He also commented that for years all have been looking for the “anchor” tenant for the downtown commons. This hotel could be that anchor.

Mr. Burbank led discussion on diversity policy – both Marriott and Urgo have a no discrimination policy. There was discussion of 156% of minimum wage for house keepers - \$12.09. Those working 30 hours a week get benefits. Environmental standards of building – very interesting. Hotel will not be LEEDs Certified. But there will be effort to minimize waste.

Mr. Burbank comment – we are being asked to give maximum tax abatement over ten years. The plus will be tax revenue but this comes at significant cost of over \$3 Million over ten years. Ms. Robertson pointed out that currently there is very little tax being paid on the parcel. Mr. Burbank still concerned with issues not addressed by the CIITAP policy noticeable living wage.

Mr. Shinagawa stated that the idea of a sub committee is to get some answers to some questions. He also spoke to how a new hotel will really increase traffic to local businesses downtown.

Mr. Baum stated that he would like to understand the benefit structure better. He also spoke to the need for an anchor for downtown.

Ms. Robertson stated that asking questions from those asking for a benefit/abatement is okay. She compared it to someone asking for food stamps – they need to fill out pages of personal information for that benefit.

**Svante Myrick moved to send the application for the Hotel Ithaca project to a public hearing. Jim Dennis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### 2013 Memorandum of Understanding with TCAD

**Jim Dennis moved to approve the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding with TCAD. Svante Myrick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

## Officers Slate

Ms. Robertson reported that the Tompkins County Legislature approved the board of directors.

Ms. Robertson proposed the following slate of officers:

Martha Robertson – Chairperson

Jim Dennis – Vice Chairperson

Larry Baum – Treasurer

Svante Myrick – Secretary

**Larry Baum moved the slate of officers for the 2013 TCIDA Board. Svante Myrick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Larry Baum was appointed to the Audit Committee and Jean McPheeters was reappointed to the Governance Committee.

## **STAFF REPORT**

Mr. Stamm reported on the progress of the 2012 audit and reminded the board to fill out and return their self-evaluation forms. Mr. Stamm also reported that he recently testified on the Governor's budget against the removal of the sales tax abatements for IDA projects.

Ms. Filiberto reported on the Arrowhead project. The housing part of the project has taken longer than expected to get started. There has been some demolition at the site. The PIF closed in December 2012 and financing was secured. The site plan has been approved and they hope to start building this summer.

## **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

**Svante Myrick moved to approve the draft minutes of the December 13, 2012 TCIDA Board meeting. Will Burbank seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 PM

**Minutes approved at March 20, 2013 meeting.**